

COVID-19: Children, young people and families

September 2020 Evidence Summary

Key messages

Over the summer, there have been significant changes to children and young people's lives as Scotland entered Phase 3 of the route map. This involved a loosening of physical distancing for younger children, the resumption of outdoor sports and, more recently, the reopening of schools. At the same time, the occurrence of local restrictions, concerns about a rise in transmission rates as autumn approaches and the gradual ending of the furlough scheme means that it is more important than ever to keep pace with the evidence and issues relevant for recovery and future outbreak management planning. This briefing sets out some of the most recent evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland, drawing on UK and international evidence where appropriate.

Mental wellbeing

There is a fairly consistent finding in Scottish surveys that the mental wellbeing of girls, particularly older girls has fared worse than that of boys during the pandemic. Other UK and international research shows a general worsening of mental wellbeing (especially anxiety, loneliness and depression), particularly for young people with pre-existing mental health problems, those living in poverty, and other disadvantaged groups such as care experienced children and black and minority ethnic (BME) young people. There is some mixed evidence, however, with one English longitudinal survey reporting improved mental wellbeing in younger teenagers during lockdown compared to the previous year, though this was not the case for LGBTQ+ students and those with a health problem or disability.

Boredom, isolation, uncertainty and lack of control continue to be factors for many young people during lockdown, particularly disadvantaged young people. Remote schooling (in particular), an overload of screen time and limited access to outdoor play have also been cited as taking their toll on the wellbeing of children in Scotland. That said, evidence continues to report that for some, the pandemic has had positive mental health impacts.

Evidence shows that things that helped children and young people during lockdown were routine and structure, a sense of control in their lives, having things to do, contact with friends and the wider school community, physical activity and learning new skills. Going forward, evidence suggests the things that will help children and young people recover is support from parents/carers

(e.g. to manage stress and develop healthy habits), organisations to reach out to young people with more digital and remote services where appropriate, and an emphasis on mental wellbeing in schools. In particular, it is suggested that some children and young people will need additional support in school to socialise and to cope with increased anxieties, trauma or bereavement. Other organisations emphasise the importance of play, particularly outdoor play, for younger children's mental wellbeing.

Physical health and wellbeing

Although there is some evidence that children in Scotland (aged 8-14) felt that they were getting enough exercise during lockdown, older children and girls were slightly less likely to report this as time went on. Some parents of young children in Scotland report a reduction in physical activity and worsened eating behaviour since lockdown. That said, many parents also reported an increase in time spent outdoors.

Education, learning and employment

A number of non-representative Scottish parent surveys undertaken over the summer show reasonable levels of concern about children returning to school (approximately 50%), especially amongst single parents. Parents with younger children are most concerned about virus transmission and children's wellbeing. UK-wide surveys report higher levels of concern in parents of children with special educational needs (SEN), parents who do not work and those with lower incomes. Key concerns are that their child will not get the emotional, behavioural and educational support that they need. Key issues in relation to SEN pupils (as reported by teachers) are social distancing, mental wellbeing, changes in routine and anxiety about returning to school. Some organisations are worried that children with disabilities and chronic health conditions may be at risk of further exclusion from education if unable to return to school due to heightened medical risk/the need to shield.

Given that young people are more likely to have lost their job or been furloughed, it is perhaps not surprising that some research is reporting a decline in education and employment progress. Key issues raised by young people in Scotland in relation to the medium and longer term impacts of COVID-19 include employment (lack of choice and availability), financial security, education (difficulty making plans in uncertain times, exams), mental health, and digital access (both a barrier and opportunity). Key concerns of young people include mental health, digital inclusion, employment and education.

Evidence continues to show that young people are able to recognise positive benefits of the pandemic including community cohesion, sustainability impacts

and improved IT skills. The value of the environment and arts and culture sectors has also been raised by young people.

Impact on families

Surveys across the UK continue to report on the difficulties experienced by parents during lockdown, particularly those with pre-school children, women and younger people. This is reflected in Scottish survey data which shows a lower than average wellbeing score amongst parents with young children, and in recent UK survey evidence which shows that, although improving, adults on low incomes and people living with children still report higher levels of poor mental well-being than other sub-groups. Wider evidence suggests that the pandemic is leading to extreme hardship for low income families, with some feeling excluded, hungry, guilty (for not providing food), fearful and stigmatised; and that single, young parents are under significant pressure.

Research by third sector organisations such as Barnardo's and Action for Children has reported parents experiencing anxiety and struggling to cope with their children during lockdown, with changes in children's emotions and behaviour widely reported. That said, there is some UK survey evidence that parents have grown closer to their children during lockdown, particularly mothers – although lone and low-income parents were slightly more likely to report their relationships had become worse.

The return of children to childcare/schools in Scotland may ease the pressure for some, although there is evidence that some parents will still struggle with lack of availability of childcare (e.g. grandparents caring for children). Wider research suggests that this will be most keenly felt by women who have taken on the lion's share of childcare and home schooling during lockdown.

Impact on young children

Scottish parent survey evidence shows that whilst some young children fared better during lockdown, there was a consistent reported decline in young children's sleep, mood, behaviour, activity levels, eating behaviour and mental wellbeing. That said, some positive impacts have been reported including an increase in imaginative and outdoor play. Most parents found it difficult to enforce physical distancing measures with their children during lockdown, with a significant minority of children not meeting up with other children even after this was permitted.

Children and young people's rights and participation

There continues to be a call from youth organisations that have conducted research for the participation of children and young people in the renewal process and planning for emergency situations. This is particularly the case

for disadvantaged children and young people many of whom experienced further exclusion during lockdown. Evidence continues to point to the need for more targeted messaging for children and young people around COVID-19, particularly as lockdown eases and guidance becomes more nuanced.

Evidence on COVID-19 messaging for children suggests that many children do not get information from resources specifically developed for them but instead get it from parents or school. Whilst parents report protecting their children from the 'worst' information, children say that they want more honest information about the coronavirus. This suggests that more needs to be done to ensure that information developed for children is reaching them and that children are given more opportunities to ask questions.

Children and young people with vulnerabilities

Care experienced young people – A number of research reports on the lived experience of care experienced young people during lockdown in Scotland (and England) report poor mental well-being, lost education and anxiety about returning to school and the future in general. Many care experienced young people in Scotland lived alone during lockdown and have experienced profound isolation. Local authorities have reported increased self-harming and suicidal ideation, with an increased number of suicide attempts among care leavers. One potentially positive outcome is that some care-experienced young people now want to stay in school longer.

Black and minority ethnic (BME) children and young people – Research by Barnardo's raises concerns about continuing stigma and bullying against Chinese children and young people as they return to school, and the difficulties that BME children and young people face in accessing information, help and support.

Refugee, migrant & asylum seeking families – Scottish evidence on the experiences of refugee, migrant and asylum seeking families during lockdown paints a picture of significant hardship. The exacerbation of inequalities is evident across a range of areas including employment, housing, education, and health, leaving some families suffering harm as a result of the pandemic. These findings are consistent with UK and international evidence on young Roma and raise considerable concerns about the potential impact of future lockdowns.

Young carers – The tremendous pressure placed on young carers in Scotland during the pandemic has impacted negatively on their wellbeing and education, leaving many more worried about their future than before the pandemic. In Scotland, survey data shows that the majority of young carers were spending significantly more time caring than before the pandemic, whilst research by Barnardo's reported that not knowing whether a family member

was on the 'vulnerable' list was associated with increased uncertainty and anxiety for young carers. Further research is needed to establish how many more children and young people in Scotland have taken on carer roles since the start of the pandemic.

Vulnerable children – There is concerning UK evidence (e.g. from the NSPCC) suggesting that there has been an increase in child abuse and neglect since the start of the pandemic, including emotional abuse, physical abuse (e.g. infant abuse head trauma), exposure to domestic abuse and child sexual abuse and exploitation, as evidenced by an increase in counselling sessions, reports from services and hospital and Europol data. The Scottish Government continues to monitor the situation in Scotland via the weekly Vulnerable Child and Adult Dataset.

Domestic abuse – Reports from across the UK continue to cite an increase in domestic abuse during the pandemic, including an increase in abusive behaviour towards children. Weekly survey data from the UK UCL study continues to show slightly higher levels of domestic abuse in households with children. There is also emerging evidence that child and adolescent to parent violence also increased during lockdown.

Children involved with or impacted by the Justice system – There is some UK research that suggests that children with a parent in prison have increasing mental health needs (e.g. anxiety about the safety of their parent) which has coincided with a drop in community-based support as a result of COVID-19.

LGBTQ+ – There is some emerging UK evidence that LGBTQ+ young people have experienced difficulties during lockdown including increased body dysphoria and higher rates of anxiety and depression than non-LGBTQ+ young people. There are also reports of difficulties in accessing mental and physical health support and informal support during lockdown. For others, it was an opportunity to come to terms with their gender identity.

Key messages relating to children and young people with vulnerabilities

- **Digital divide** – a common finding in research with disadvantaged children and families is a lack of digital access and associated problems in accessing services and benefits, connecting with others, participating in education and exercising their rights. Evidence suggests that supplying devices/broadband is only part of the picture: people also need to be provided with the appropriate skills, confidence and support. Some service providers have experienced digital access issues themselves, which has hampered their ability to deliver remote services.
- **Anxiety about the future** – Many young people are concerned and uncertain about the future, but this is particularly the case for children

with vulnerabilities such as care leavers many of whom don't know what their next step is, and for young carers and low-income families for whom the 'new normal' may bring with it new costs which may heighten exclusion and inequalities.

- **A sense of purpose and connection** – Many vulnerable children and young people experienced profound social isolation during lockdown, which impacted negatively on their mental wellbeing and education. A common theme is that they want a sense of control over their lives, things to do, and meaningful connections with others. Given recent evidence from local lockdowns, there is a risk that further restrictions could leave vulnerable children and young people feeling more isolated than ever.
- **Loss of education/exclusion** – The evidence is pointing towards significant loss of education for some groups of children in Scotland including young carers, care experienced children and refugee, migrant and asylum seeking children. Other groups at risk of further loss or exclusion include children who were/are shielding (or live with someone who is), and those at risk of child exploitation and criminality. This has led to some organisations calling for dedicated transition periods in schools for children negatively impacted and continuous education for some children and young people in the event of future lockdowns.
- **Participation** – the message from organisations conducting research with vulnerable groups is that the lived experience of children and young people needs to be central to recovery planning.

Impact on and access to services

Scottish parent survey evidence suggests that parents experienced a number of barriers to accessing services during lockdown, with some parents of young children not accessing healthcare services even when they wanted to.

There is mixed evidence on the effectiveness of virtual children's hearings. Whilst there were benefits such as reduced time and cost of travel, there were also a number of challenges in particular the inclusion and participation of children. Overall, however, the view from respondents was that it was necessary to run them in this way during lockdown. Further research is needed on how virtual hearings could be improved and made more accessible for children and young people.

Social services across the UK continue to adapt to the 'new normal'. Creative approaches adopted during lockdown have provided new opportunities for different forms of communication to enhance relationship-based practice. For example, there is some UK evidence on the value of 'side by side' communication (walking with clients in outdoor spaces), particularly for young people who felt more relaxed in an open space.

There continues to be promising evidence on the efficacy of remote forms of support for mental health interventionsⁱ, which, whilst not appropriate for everyone (particularly those in crisis), may be something to consider in the event of future lockdowns.

Evidence Gaps

The volume of survey and research data relating to COVID-19 continues to increase, particularly on education and mental health. However, there remain a number of evidence gaps in Scotland:

- The need for more longitudinal and robust research is evident, both in the short-term (to address some of the bias in surveys published to date) but also in the longer term to understand potential impacts on the development and lifelong wellbeing of this generation of children and young people.
- The evidence gap on the impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged children and families is closing, although more evidence on BME children and those involved with or impacted by the justice system (e.g. children with a parent in prison) in Scotland is still needed.
- More evidence is needed on the numbers and lived experience of children living in shielding households (including young carers) and how this is impacting on their education, health and wellbeing. Similarly, more data is needed on the prevalence and impact of COVID-related illness and bereavement on children and young people.
- As noted in the July briefing, as restrictions are eased and tightened in some areas further evidence will be required on how children, young people and families are understanding, complying and adapting to different lockdown phases.

Research Topics

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NOTE – Many of the COVID-19 surveys are drawn from self-selecting samples (a sample that a participant volunteers to be part of rather than being selected). This means that the findings are not representative of the wider population and are likely to be biased in some way. Results of individual studies should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Scottish Evidence

General children, young people and parent/carers COVID-19 research

How are you doing?

Source: The Children's Parliament

Date: August 2020

The Children's Parliament has run surveys for 8-14 year olds in April, May and June on the experiences and views of children during the pandemic. The latest survey was completed by 2,810 respondents, lower than in previous survey waves. This is an open survey and therefore should not be treated as representative of children of this age in Scotland. The Children's Parliament will conduct one further survey in September to capture data as children transition into school life. The latest report compares results from the three surveys. Key findings were:

Home learning

- Most children struggled with home learning and were increasingly worried about school work as time went on.
- Over the three surveys, there was an increase in levels of boredom and a decline in children reporting having fun things to do in their days.

Relationships

- Whilst most children enjoyed being with their family, and identified parents/carers as their greatest support, these figures declined from April to June.
- Most children had someone they can talk to about their worries, but a significant minority indicated that they have no one.

Safety

- The majority of children reported that they are safe at home. However, findings suggest an increased vulnerability among girls as lockdown progressed.

Mental wellbeing

- Children displayed a decline in mental wellbeing over the three surveys. In June, more children reported being lonely, and fewer felt in a positive mood and resilient than in April.
- Across the months, around a third of respondents indicated that there are lots of things to worry about, while more than half expressed a general worry about the future. Around a quarter reported being worried about five or more things.

Gender differences – older girls

- The survey results emphasise the need to consider the impact of lockdown on 12-14 year old girls – they are more likely to feel bored, lonely, worry about things in their life, including their own health, than younger girls and boys of all ages.

Read the report: [The Children's Parliament How are you doing? Survey Report August 2020](#)

TeenCovidLife Survey 1 Results

Source: The University of Edinburgh

Date: 10 Aug 2020

The University of Edinburgh has published findings from its first TeenCovidLife Survey – an online survey for 12-17 year olds on the impact of lockdown, social distancing, home schooling and exam cancellations on young people's health and wellbeing. The survey ran from 22nd May to 5th July and was completed by 5,548 young people across all local authorities. Sixty five per cent of respondents were female and 34% were male. This is an open survey and therefore should not be treated as representative of children of this age in Scotland. More detailed analyses by protected characteristics will be available at a later date. Key findings are summarised below:

- **Loneliness** – There was a **three-fold increase** in respondents' self-reported feelings of loneliness from nearly one in ten (9%) of respondents recalling feeling lonely before lockdown to nearly a third (28%) reporting loneliness during lockdown.
- **Stress** - When asked if they had felt nervous or stressed because of COVID-19 in the past week, about a fifth of respondents (22%) said 'most' or 'all of the time'.
- **Sleep** - When asked how they were sleeping compared to before lockdown, the picture was mixed with 20% reporting sleeping better, 35% about the same, but 39% reporting sleeping worse. 69% of respondents said they were going to bed later during lockdown.
- **Home based schooling** - The picture was also mixed when it came to home learning. 23% of respondents found it 'very' or 'quite easy', but nearly half of respondents (46%) found it 'quite' or 'very difficult'. When

asked about how stressed they felt about schoolwork 8% said 'not at all', 30% 'a little', 27% 'some' and 35% 'a lot'.

- **Worries about education** - 58% of respondents were worried (more than one in ten were 'extremely worried'); whilst 14% said they were 'not at all worried'. Anxiety about school exams in older groups (S4 to S6) was high, with 69% reporting moderate to extreme worry, and only 10% saying that they were not worried at all.
- **Age and Gender differences** - Across almost all questions, 15 to 17 year olds had a worse experience than the younger age group (12-14), and **girls reported a worse experience than boys**. There were significantly lower levels of wellbeing among the older girls. For example, 45% of 15-17 year old girls reported feeling lonely most or all of the time, compared to about 10% of 12-14 year boys.

Read the report: [TeenCovidLife Survey 1 General Report](#)

Views and experiences of parents of young children in Scotland during lockdown

Source: Public Health Scotland (PHS) (COVID-19 Early years resilience and impact survey)

Date: 2 September 2020

PHS ran an open parent online survey on the impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions on the health and wellbeing of young children (aged 2-7) and their families. The survey, which ran from 22 June to 6 July (during Phase 2 of the route map), received approximately 11,000 responses. The sample was self-selecting and cannot therefore be seen as nationally representative. Three separate thematic reports were published presenting initial topline findings in advance of a more detailed analysis and reporting of the survey data.

The questions on **children's behaviours and wellbeing** (Report 1) showed an overall decline compared with before lockdown. Key findings were:

- **Sleep** – A third of parents reported a decline in the quality of their child's sleep compared with before lockdown, while 6% reported an improvement.
- **Behaviour** – Almost half (47%) of parents said that their child's behaviour was worse than before lockdown, while 8% said it was better.
- **Mood** – Almost half (47%) of parents said that their child's mood was worse than before lockdown, while 8% said it was better.
- **Concentration** - four in ten parents said that their child's behaviour was worse than before lockdown, while 6% said it was better.
- **Physical activity** – Almost half (47%) of children were less physically active than before lockdown, while almost a quarter (24%) were more physically active.

- **Eating** – Around a third (32%) of parents described their child's eating behaviour as worse than before lockdown, while 14% described it as better.
- **Mental wellbeing** – Almost half (46%) of 2 – 3 year olds and over a third (36%) of 4-7 year olds had a slightly raised, high, or very high Strength and Difficulty Score, indicating the presence of behavioural or emotional difficulties. This is higher than in a nationally representative survey completed just before lockdown (however, given that this was not a representative survey such comparisons would be interpreted cautiously).

The questions on **play and learning, outdoors and social interactions** (Report 2) give a mixed picture, with some positive impacts of lockdown. Key findings were:

- **Imaginative play** – for 46% of the children, parents and carers rated their imaginative play since lockdown as better than before lockdown, while 12% rated it worse.
- **Home learning and play activities** – the majority of children had participated in home learning activities at least four out of seven days. 79% had looked at books or read stories, 64% had undertaken letter, number, word or shape recognition activities, 58% had sung songs and 51% had done drawing or painting.
- **Indoor active play** – 43% of children had played actively inside on at least four out of the last seven days, while 14% had not played actively inside at all in the last week.
- **Screen based play** – 61% of the children had played a screen-based game on at least four of the last seven days. This was higher among the older age group.
- **Time spent outdoors** – 45% of children spent more time outdoors than before lockdown, while 29% spent less. Eighty one per cent of children had played outside on at least four out of the last seven days. Thirty two per cent of children had been to a park or other local greenspace on at least four out of the last seven days, while 27% had not been to a greenspace at all in the last week.
- **Meeting others** - 14% of children had not met up with anyone else from outside their household, and a further 24% had not met any other children.
- **ELC attendance** - 93% of children had not been attending any type of childcare or education setting since the lockdown began.
- **Speaking to friends and family** - 44% of children had not spoken to friends at all in the last week, with only 14% having spoken to friends on at least four out of the last seven days. More children had been in contact with extended family, with 43% having spoken to family members on at least four out of the last seven days, although 9% had not spoken to family members at all in the last week.

- **Experience of physical distancing** – Overall, 76% of the parents and carers agreed that they had found it difficult or stressful to enforce physical distancing measures with their children.

The questions on **experience of parents and carers** (Report 3) showed that parents' wellbeing was negatively affected. Key findings were:

- **Mental wellbeing** – parents' wellbeing as measured by Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) showed a mean score of 20. This is lower than in a nationally representative sample of parents with children of this age, where the mean score was 27.
- **Employment** - For 25% of the children, the employment status of the main earner in their household had been affected by the lockdown, most commonly furlough (11%), a reduction in pay (8%) or hours (6%). Loss of employment affected 4% of families.
- **Household income** - 44% of parents reported that their household income had reduced because of lockdown.
- **Children's service use** – of those that had wanted to access their health visitor or family nurse, 30% had not done so. Of those that had needed to access their GP, 13% had not done so.
- **Parental feelings about return to school or childcare** – just under half of parents of children returning to school or childcare were concerned about their child becoming ill with coronavirus (41%), their passing coronavirus to someone else (49%) and that that the new childcare or school environment would not be good for their child's wellbeing (45%). 77% of parents were confident that schools will do what is needed to reduce the risk of infection.
- **Children's feelings about return to school or childcare** – Three quarters of parents (77%) agreed that their child was looking forward to returning to school or childcare, while 24% thought their child was worried.

[Read the Public Health Scotland COVID-19 Early years resilience and impact survey reports](#)

Children and young people's participation in crisis: A research report

Source: A Place in Childhood

Date: July 2020

A Place in Childhood held three virtual workshops with children and young people aged 10-16. The aim of this project was to give children the opportunity to discuss and agree the big changes and challenges they face due to COVID-19, and how they might be addressed. The workshops were carried out in May and June. There were 25 participants across project teams from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Rural Stirlingshire and Rural Falkirk. The key themes that emerged from the workshops were:

- the experience of loss of face to face social interaction;
- remote schooling;

- increasing stress on family resources;
- an overload of screen-time; and
- limited access to the outdoor play and recreation activities that usually underpin youth stress-coping strategies.

It emerged that **remote schooling, in particular, was taking a toll on their well-being**. The report highlights the benefits of children's participation in decision-making and the need to uphold these rights even in lockdown-situations. The report makes the following recommendations:

1. Develop a protocol for the early participation of groups of children and young people in emergency situations.
2. Ensure measures are in place that do not unfairly disadvantage children and young people.
3. Create a grounded contingency framework and principles for remote and blended learning, which is informed by the experiences of lockdown to-date.
4. Develop appropriate and resonant resources and messaging around COVID-19 and following crises, with children and young people.

Read the report: [#ScotYouth and COVID: Children and Young People's Participation in Crisis: A Research Report](#)

Physical health and wellbeing

The Scottish Parliament's [‘How are you doing?’ June survey](#) reported that physical wellbeing measures have remained fairly consistent throughout lockdown with most children (73%) agreeing that they make healthy choices and get enough exercise. As reported before, **older children** were less likely to report this, however, and there was a statistically significant **decline in the proportion of girls saying that they were getting enough exercise**: 80% in April and 76% in June.

Disabled people's lived experience of shielding: Key survey results

Source: Inclusion Scotland

Date: July 2020

Inclusion Scotland carried out a survey of 135 adults shielding. The survey makes no mention of children in shielding households but highlights some of the difficulties that children living in shielding households might have faced. Adult respondents were deeply affected by their experiences of shielding during the pandemic. Many stated that they felt left behind or abandoned by services, and specific COVID-19-related support did not reach everyone. There was also a feeling that **people who are shielding could be left behind** as restrictions are lifted for the general population. Respondents were

concerned about the long-term impact on their physical and mental health and about the process for coming out of shielding and returning to work.

Read the report: [Inclusion Scotland Disabled people's lived experience of shielding: Key survey results](#)

Read the news story: [Inclusion Scotland Shielding Report \(News Story\)](#)

Scottish survey data cited in our July briefing estimated that about a third of households with children (32%) had someone in their household with a health condition that makes them vulnerable to COVID-19¹. Further evidence is needed on the numbers and type of households with children in Scotland that have someone who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and/or still shielding, and how this is impacting on the health and wellbeing of children and young people in those households.

Education, learning and employment

Next Steps (Back to School) and How are you doing now?

Source: Connect

Date: 29th July

Connect has published its report from its **second lockdown survey** which asks parents/carers of children aged 0-18 for their views on children returning to school/nursery in August and repeats questions from the first survey on general wellbeing (1578 responses). The survey ran from 27 May to 30 June and received 7,858 responses from all 32 local authorities. Most respondents had primary aged children. Over one in ten respondents were single parent households (one in five single parents were working full time). Key findings are:

- More than half (51%) of parent/carer respondents were worried about children returning to school, especially single parents and parents of younger children.
- The biggest concern for parents in relation to their children is children missing their friends (76%). This is followed by concern about their child's health and wellbeing (57%) and their school work (56%). Parents of younger children (particularly pre-school) are more likely to identify concerns about their child coping.
- Most respondents (72%) felt that they had what they needed to keep their child health and happy at home. That said, one in ten did not and this was most pronounced for single parents. Single parents were also less likely to say that they had what they needed to support school work and learning (51%) compared to two parent households (66%).

¹ [The Impact of COVID-19 on Wellbeing in Scotland](#) (Scottish Government, 2020)

- Feedback was also sought on blended learning which may be relevant in the event of future national or local lockdowns, with a key consideration being employer flexibility.

Read the report: [Next Steps \(Back to School\) and How are you Doing Now?](#)

Young People's Response to Medium Term COVID-19 Recovery

Source: Young Scot

Date: May 2020

Young Scot carried out a workshop in May with 49 young people aged 11-23 to consider the **medium and long term impacts of COVID-19 on young people**, and to identify positive aspects of the recovery, and policy priorities for recovery plans. At the time of the workshop, the young people who participated had experienced a range of negative impacts. The most commonly mentioned negative impacts were on their **education, work and mental health**. In terms of mental health, participants reported feeling **stressed, bored, missing their friends**, and some reported feeling isolated or suffering from anxiety and depression. However, most participants had spent their time in positive ways too, and some valued having the space to reflect and relax. Participants were asked to consider the impacts of COVID-19 over the next five years on a range of young people. The key issues raised included:

- **Employment** - the impact on local economies reducing availability of work, both during study and linked to career choice, lack of practical employment experience as part of FE/HE
- **Poverty/financial impacts** - including worries about the financial impact on parents
- **Education** - both school/exams and FE/HE; difficulty in making longer term life/career plans in uncertain environment, transitions between primary and secondary school.
- **Mental health** - worsening mental health for those with pre-existing conditions, negative impacts on those not previously affected, social isolation, access to mental health services.
- **Digital access** and access to technology was seen as both a barrier and an opportunity.

Young people also identified a number of **positive impacts and opportunities** including:

- Communities drawing closer together and people valuing their friends and local community more;
- 'Access anywhere' service provision;
- Sustainability impacts of lockdown, e.g. sustainable travel; and,
- Improved technology and improved IT skills.

Read the report: [Young People's Response to Medium Term COVID-19 Recovery Hot Report - May 2020 \(Young Scot\)](#)

ADVISORY GROUP ON ECONOMIC RECOVERY: COVID-19 IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

Source: Young Scot

Date: June 2020

Young Scot also carried out a workshop in June with 22 young people aged 16-25 to explore the **priorities of young people in the medium-term on the economic and employment recovery** from the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown in Scotland. Key issues and opportunities identified were:

- Concerns about **small and local businesses survival**. In particular, young people were worried about a lack of opportunities in part-time employment and seasonal work and their ability to sustain themselves in its absence.
- There was a particular worry about the **hospitality industry** which primarily employs young staff. Young people who have been furloughed throughout the crisis are concerned that they may not have a position to return to.
- Significant concern around **financial security and support**. Many young people were choosing employment opportunities to gain some financial security rather than because they were relevant to their skills and experience.
- The move towards **working from home** was highlighted as an opportunity that could potentially benefit young people, through saving money on travel expenses and allowing young people to access opportunities no matter where they live.
- Concerns around the **social distancing restrictions** that are in place and how they will be eased over time. There were expectations around some people were deviating from the measures and what this could mean for them in a working environment.
- The **disruption to education** and with grades being determined on course work, there was concerns around how this will affect young people in the future.
- The young people were hopeful that the lockdown restriction might positively affect the **environment sector**, with new job opportunities opening up, new opportunities for young people and projects being developed.
- Finally, the groups highlighted the need to support the **arts and culture sector**. Many of the young people highlighted creative practices that they have been getting involved with throughout lockdown and the need to continue to value the sector.

Read the report: [Advisory group on economic recovery: COVID-19 impact on employment report \(Young Scot\)](#)

Impact on families

PARENTS UNDER PRESSURE AS VIRUS LIMITS CHILDCARE OPTIONS

Source: Bank of Scotland

Date: 25 July 2020

New **How Scotland Lives** research from **Bank of Scotland** revealed that while more than two-fifths (44%) of parents rely on grandparents for childcare support, more than a quarter (27%) feel they can no longer be as dependent on family and friends, due to ongoing health and safety concerns around the pandemic. Other key findings were:

- **More than one in four parents feel unable to ask for childcare help** from loved ones as a result of pandemic.
- 15% of parents require additional childcare help from friends and family this year as they continue to juggle parenting and work responsibilities.
- Grandparents now providing £3,770 worth of childcare a year.

This suggests that some families will continue to struggle juggling work and childcare, even once children return to school. This may have financial and employment implications.

Read the report: [Parents under pressure as virus limits childcare options \(Bank of Scotland\)](#)

Care experienced and disadvantaged young people

How to Build back better: listening to the voices of our young people

Source: MCR Pathways

Date: 29 July 2020

MCR, a Scottish mentor charity that supports care experienced children in secondary schools, ran a survey over six weeks in June and July for care experienced and disadvantaged young people aged 13-18 on their experiences of lockdown. 1,347 young people from city, town, rural and island settings participated in the survey. Fifty six per cent of respondents were care-experienced; 44% were on the edges of the care system experiencing various forms of disadvantage. Key findings were:

- Impact on mental well-being - Two thirds (67%) of young people are **feeling low, more anxious and stressed since lockdown**, and 89% reported changes in sleeping patterns.
- Impact on education - **68% said that they did no school work during lockdown**. For nearly half of those this was because they felt the materials were hard to understand; 43% were too stressed and anxious. **Over a quarter had caring duties that impacted on their capacity for home learning.**

- Concerns about returning to school include getting back into a routine, falling behind, COVID-19 infection, and re-establishment of relationships with peers and teachers.
- To help this process, respondents asked for one-to-one time with teachers and extra help with learning at home. Other practical considerations (for blended learning) include problems with digital access and space at home. **Young people want and need routine and structure.**
- The report recommends that in **the event of further lockdowns, care-experienced and disadvantaged young people should be prioritised and provided with continuous full-time schooling as standard.** Either delivered in school or if necessary in other public buildings.
- Impact on the future – although most respondents had concerns about their future, 65% of young people said that COVID-19 has not changed their future plans for what they want to do when they leave school. Nearly a fifth of respondents now want to stay in school longer.
- That said, 80% of respondents said that they are worried about grades and 62% of leavers are worried about their next step.

Further reports are planned which will look at differences by socio-demographics and hear from young people about what kind of support they need.

Read the report: [MCR Pathways Lockdown Survey: Listening To The Voices Of Our Young People](#)

Bridging the digital divide for care experienced young people in Scotland

Source: CELCIS

Date: July 2020

The Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) and the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant have published a briefing on the challenges and solutions to digital exclusion before and during COVID-19 restrictions. A brief overview of the current situation for care experienced young people in Scotland, drawn from literature and discussion with partners and those providing services and support to care experienced young people, is brought together with findings from a short survey with local authorities on the key challenges and barriers, plus possible short term and long term solutions.

Issues of digital exclusion and disadvantage, which were present for many care experienced young people before lockdown, have only intensified during the COVID-19 crisis. Key findings are:

- The three main challenges raised by all local authorities were lack of access to hardware, lack of consistent reliable access to broadband and Wi-Fi and for some, gaps in digital literacy or confidence.
- The overwhelming view from those providing services and support to care experienced young people is that **digital connection is essential, now more than ever**. Digital inclusion is essential for all areas for care leaver's lives from meeting basic needs to access to training/education and employment, and applying for benefits and paying bills.
- **Many care experienced young people living alone during lockdown have experienced profound isolation** and an increased sense of loneliness, impacting on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Local authorities have also reported increased **self-harming and suicidal ideation**, with an increased number of suicide attempts among care leavers.
- Lacking digital access, as well the skills and confidence, creates additional barriers and impinges on **young people's participation rights** to virtual meetings and processes (e.g. looked after reviews).
- Underpinning any longer-term solution needs to be the acceptance of digital connection for care experienced young people as a basic right, and necessity (e.g. incorporated into care leavers grants, ensuring accommodation has Wi-Fi, providing digital support).

Read the briefing: [Bridging the digital divide for care experienced young people in Scotland: If not now, when? \(CELCIS\)](#)

Black and minority ethnic (BME) children, young people and families

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland - Refugee and migrant families' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic: insights from frontline practitioners in Glasgow

Source: University of Glasgow

Date: 30 July 2020

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland has published early findings from its research with frontline workers on the impact of COVID-19 in high poverty settings in Glasgow. The most recent bulletin focuses on refugees, migrants and asylum seekers and describes how the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities.

- **Impact on employment** - Refugees and migrants are more likely to be employed in lower-paid and less secure jobs, so were particularly vulnerable to the economic impact of the crisis. The insecure nature of many Roma people's employment meant that many families are ineligible for financial support (e.g. Universal Credit and the furlough

scheme). With more informal third sector support, such as community hubs and meals, closed due to lockdown, many Roma families were struggling to meet their basic needs.

- **Housing inequality** – inadequate housing and overcrowding (with some Roma families of up to 10 people sharing a flat with no outdoor space during lockdown) has made the lockdown experience even more challenging for families, adding to the likelihood of transmission and increasing the anxiety and pressure on the mental health of children and parents.
- **Educational inequalities** - inadequate housing combined with language barriers and digital exclusion have directly impacted on children's learning and increased educational inequalities.
- **Health inequality** – difficulties in accessing translation services made it more difficult for refugee and migrant families to access services such as healthcare during lockdown. Participants reported high numbers of Roma people contracting the virus, being hospitalised and, sadly, dying – with practitioners acting as an intermediary between families and hospitals. This meant that some families were unable to say goodbye to their family members as they passed away in hospital.
- **Problems with accessing and understanding information** about the pandemic and social distancing – because of the language barrier there was misinformation within Romanian Roma communities at the start of lockdown leading to fear, with some returning to Romania.
- Participants reported that **asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable** and suffering harm as a result of the pandemic. This has included financial distress² leading to reliance on foodbanks, some of which shut during lockdown; high levels of fear, particularly in context of ethnic minorities being disproportionately affected by COVID-19; problems in navigating the complex asylum process in the absence of face-to-face and translation services; and negative impacts of moving asylum seekers into hotels on mental health and wellbeing.

Read the report: [Children's Neighbourhood Scotland – Early insights into the COVID-19 response 30 July 2020](#)

Young carers

2020 Vision: Hear Me, See Me, Support Me and Don't Forget Me.

Source: Carers Trust Scotland

Date: July 2020

The Carers Trust Scotland published its survey on the impact of Coronavirus on young carers aged 12 to 17 and young adult carers aged 18 to 25. The survey (which was conducted UK-wide in June) received 214 responses in

² Asylum seekers are entitled to £37.75 per week.

Scotland. It shows that the increased pressure placed on young carers during the pandemic is impacting negatively on their mental health and wellbeing. Key findings were:

- The majority of young carers (59%) and young adult carers (67%) were **spending significantly more time caring** than before the pandemic. 6% of young carers and one in ten (11%) of young adult carers in Scotland were spending over 90 hours a week caring for a family member or friend. 43% of young carers were spending 20-49 hours per week in a caring capacity.
- One quarter (25%) of young carers and two fifths (42%) of young adult carers were unable to take any break from their caring role.
- 69% of young carers and 76% of young adult carers in Scotland were **feeling more stressed** since Coronavirus.
- 74% of young carers and 73% of young adult carers in Scotland were **feeling less connected** to others since Coronavirus, with most less able to stay in touch with friends. That said, some young/adult carers feel closer to the person they care for.
- 45% of young carers and 68% of young adult carers in Scotland said that their **mental health is worse** since Coronavirus.
- Although almost a third (32%) of young carers and half (50%) of young adult carers wanted support with their mental health, only 4% of young carers and 15% of young adult carers were accessing remote counselling or therapies at the time of the survey.
- 71% of young carers and 85% of young adult carers in Scotland were **more worried about the future** since Coronavirus.
- 58% of young carers in Scotland were feeling that their **education has suffered** since Coronavirus. That said, some young carers felt that learning had helped them cope.

Read the report: [2020 Vision: Hear Me, See Me, Support Me and Don't Forget Me \(Carers Trust Scotland\)](#)

Read the news story: [Steep decline in mental health of Scottish young carers following Coronavirus outbreak \(Carers Trust Scotland news story\)](#)

Research from across the UK and beyond

General children, young people and parent/carer COVID-19 research

Life on hold: Children's wellbeing and COVID-19

Source: The Children's Society

Date: July 2020

The Children's Society has published a report of findings from its annual UK household survey of over 2,000 parents and their children aged 10 to 17 carried out between 28 April and 8 June, and a further consultation with 150 children and young people between 21 April and 19 June on how they felt about lockdown. Key findings were:

- Children and young people report considerably **lower levels of life satisfaction during lockdown compared to previous years** - 18% of children and young people were dissatisfied with their lives overall, an increase from 10% to 13% over the last five years.
- **Lack of choice over their lives** was also highlighted, with both young people and parents reporting unhappiness with the amount of choice they have.
- As with other COVID-19 surveys, children reported that the aspects of coronavirus they struggled to cope most with were being unable to see friends (37%) and family (30%).
- Overall, **9 in 10 of all children (89%) said they were worried to some extent about coronavirus**.
- Despite this, **a majority of children (84%) said they had coped to some extent** with the impact of the pandemic overall. As with other surveys, girls reported coping less well than boys.
- The survey found evidence that **children in poverty were more worried during lockdown**. A higher proportion of young people in poverty stated they were 'very worried' about Coronavirus than those not in poverty (23% compared to 15%).
- **Half of parents (50%) anticipate that coronavirus will harm their children's happiness over the coming year**.

Read the report: [Life on hold: Children's wellbeing and COVID-19 \(The Children's Society Annual Survey Report\)](#)

COVID-19 and Children's Play and Mobility

Source: International Play Association

Date: 24 Aug 2020

This international study uses a specially-created 'Child Lockdown Index' (CLI) to allow for meaningful comparisons between 25 countries on children's play. The report asserts that the focus of research and policy during the pandemic has mostly focused on education but that **the importance of play should not be underestimated, particularly outdoor play**. The CLI³ for Scotland is 20 which is higher than some countries including Germany and Canada (11) but lower than others such as Spain and Italy (32). This baseline measure will be used to help track the ongoing impact of the pandemic on children's lives. The report calls for governments to consider how pandemic measures may restrict children's play opportunities. It recommends the use of a risk-benefit assessment tool used by some play advocates. The report states that it is **important to acknowledge the sacrifices that children are being asked to make, and the potential consequences for their rights, health and well-being**.

Read the report: [Play in Lockdown \(International Play Association report\)](#)

Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services

Source: Human Rights Watch

Date: July 21, 2020

This Human Rights Watch report covers 3 areas: food insecurity, digital exclusion and the impact of the pandemic on disabled children (this is covered in the 'Children and Families impacted by Disabilities' section below). The report covers a range of research undertaken and makes a number of recommendations, including the need for an emergency response plan in the event of future COVID-19 lockdowns, or other crises, that reflects a spectrum of no-, low-, and high-tech responses, and includes models for support for groups of children at risk of exclusion.

- **Food insecurity** – [Human Rights Watch research in May](#) found that some measures taken by devolved authorities in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland produced more promising results than the free school meal replacement voucher system adopted in England and recommends the use of direct cash transfers and other non-voucher based systems. The submission also recommends that NRPF (no recourse to public funds) restrictions on access to free school meals be lifted permanently.
- **Digital exclusion** – Human Rights Watch survey research and interviews with parents and school staff on the impact of lockdown on children's education found that the digital divide had an adverse effect on children's remote learning. Teachers raised concerns about **loss of contact with students from low-income families, minority ethnic**

³ This is a numerical score for each country that aims to capture in a single number both the severity and the longevity of the measures that have been imposed. It embraces school/childcare closures, and also restrictions on children's freedom to be out of doors and play.

backgrounds, traveller pupils, and those living in rural communities and significant loss of learning for these groups.

Families that struggle to afford devices and internet are forced to make hard choices, with many families only having one device. The digital divide also impeded teachers' ability to teach effectively (e.g. due to teacher's internet issues). Finally, the submission raises concerns about the unprecedented amounts of children's personal data being gathered by online education platforms, potentially putting children's data protection and privacy rights at risk.

Read the report: [Human Rights Watch Submission to the UK Parliament Education Committee: Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services](#)

Children's information sources and understanding of Coronavirus

Source: Edge Hill University

Date: 30 Apr 2020

Edge Hill University is leading an international study⁴ on where children (aged 7-12 years) get their information about coronavirus (COVID-19) and their understandings of the virus and current public health guidance for social distancing. The project aims to help work out the **best way to give children news, important facts and safety tips** about coronavirus. Early findings are based on online child and parent surveys which was completed by 150 children and 200 parents. A summary of the findings is presented below:

Access to information

- Most of the children who answered the survey **do not get information from resources specifically developed for children.**
- Children told us **they are getting information about COVID-19 through their parents/carers or school.**
- Children want information through their parents, teachers, and TV programmes like Newsround.
- Parents who answered the survey told us that providing information to their child was a "balancing act". They answered their children's questions, gave them just enough information so they didn't worry, but shielded them from "the worst of it".

Children's knowledge and understanding of COVID-19

- Children who answered the survey understand that washing their hands and social distancing are important.
- Children told us that they have **unmet information needs**, such as "people play it down and tell me it can't kill people, but people are dying each day".

⁴ The team are working with child health researchers from Canada, Brazil, Australia, Sweden and Spain to help examine and compare children's experiences and opinions about coronavirus information (COVID-19) from across the world.

- At the time of the survey (during lockdown), **children had lots of questions** in particular ones pertaining to return to school, cure for the virus, safety concerns and the COVID-19 death rate.

Read the news release: [Children's Information about coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – Edge Hill University news story](#)

Children ask scientists about coronavirus

Source: Children's Commissioner for England (but organised in partnership with all UK Children's Commissioners)

Date: 11 August 2020

Children from across the UK aged 7 to 19 asked SAGE scientists their questions about the coronavirus pandemic. This provides some insight into the areas of interest and concern that children in the UK have about coronavirus. Their questions included topics about pets, face masks, school buses (risks of transmission), testing (what it's like to have a test), school uniforms, transmission rates (risk to children including BME children), symptoms, support bubbles, and the risk of a second wave. The event was organised by the Children's Commissioner's Offices for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Listen to the Podcast: [Children's Commissioner for England Podcast 'Children ask scientists about coronavirus'](#)

A key theme from a survey of more than 100 children and young people supported by Barnardo's and a further 150 children and young people across the UK was that children and young people felt that **they were being ignored by decision makers during the pandemic**. Recommendations to government include involving children and young people in 'recovery planning' and giving them a role in relevant national decision making.

Read the news release: [Young people call on government to prioritise mental health in UK's coronavirus recovery \(Barnardo's news story\)](#)

[Find out more about Barnardo's Big Conversation Campaign](#)

Mental health and wellbeing

Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and children and young people's mental health (Issue 3)

Source: Evidence Based Practice Unit (EBPU)

Date: 26 Aug 2020

In its third publication, the EBPU continues to review the international evidence base in order to address three core questions: what the mental

health challenges are for children and young people, what they are for disproportionately affected groups and what might help children and young people to manage those challenges. A summary of the key points from its most recent publication (which captures research identified between 25th May and 14th June 2020) is provided below:

Key mental health challenges for children and young people during the pandemic:

- Mental health difficulties such as **anxiety and depression have markedly increased**.
- Feelings of panic, stress, fear and fatigue amid **uncertainty and a lack of control** among young people are also widespread, which has contributed to growing stress and anxiety.
- Concerns about returning to schools and colleges are also common.
- Family dynamics, learning and education, financial stressors, social isolation and loneliness are all stressors contributing to poor mental health during the pandemic
- For some, the pandemic has had **positive mental health impacts** due to a sense of support and potentially reduced stressors, such as social pressures at school.

Key mental health challenges for disproportionately affected groups:

- Children and young people with **pre-existing health and education needs**, such as anxiety, ADHD, and SEN are experiencing an **increase in symptoms and compromised access to support**.
- Children and young people with pre-existing social care needs, such as young people experiencing **homelessness, children in care, young carers, and young people experiencing poverty** are, on the whole, struggling more due to reduced support systems and further financial impacts of the pandemic.
- **BME children and young people are disproportionately affected** by the coronavirus as they and their parents and carers are both more likely to be key workers, and more likely to work in shut-down sectors. They therefore have greater likelihood of exposure to the virus while also being more likely to experience loss of household income. As a result, the mental health impact for these young people is exacerbated.

Helping children and young people to manage these challenges:

- **Parents and carers play a key role in helping children and young people** to manage their stress during the pandemic and to develop healthy habits such as good sleeping habits, play, and exercise, to promote positive mental health.
- Given the likely extended period of social distancing, professionals supporting young people should continue to be receptive to the needs of young people and continue to adapt their ways of working to include **digital and remote services**.

- **Education professionals need to be sensitive to the mental health needs** of young people during lockdown and offer support, but also plan additional support and ways of working as many prepare to transition back to schools and colleges.
- Financial and logistical support for new and existing local systems from health, education and social support agencies can help improve the support available for all young people .
- Multisector and collaborative working is particularly crucial at this time, to provide a joined-up response to supporting young people.

Read the report: [Emerging Evidence: Coronavirus and children and young people's mental health Issue 3 \(Evidence Based Practice Unit\)](#)

[Read Issues 1 and 2 from the Evidence Based Practice Unit](#)

Impact on young people with mental health needs

Source: Young Minds

Date: Summer 2020

Young Minds has published findings of their second UK survey of 2,036 young people aged 13-25 which was conducted between 5 June and 6 July, 3 months after the first survey. This included 1,081 young people who had accessed some form of mental health support in the first three months of the year.

- More than 3 in 5 respondents (83%) in both surveys reported that their mental health has worsened due to the coronavirus. The data suggests that mental health has **deteriorated over time** as the number of young people saying that it is 'much worse' has increased since the first survey (40% compared to 32%).
- The impact on mental health was usually related to an **increase in loneliness and anxiety** (87% of respondents agreed that they had felt lonely or isolated during the lockdown period). Those with eating disorders and a history of self-harm reported an increase in these behaviours.
- A number of **LGBTQ+ respondents said their dysphoria had got worse** or that they felt that they were not able to be their real selves at home.
- Helpful coping mechanisms included connecting with friends, writing a diary, exercise, spending time with family and watching TV or reading.
- **Access to support appears to have become more difficult** for some. Responses to this survey suggest that almost a third (31%) of young people who were receiving some form of mental health support immediately before the pandemic are no longer able to access the support they need (5% more than the previous survey).

- As reported in previous briefings, this survey showed that many young **people lack access to technology to access remote services**, are concerned about privacy or simply do not feel safe opening up online.
- Overall, there appears to be a **persistent stigma around mental health**. Half of respondents (50%) did not feel confident about talking to someone about their mental health if they needed to.
- Young people, although looking forward to returning to school/work/university and some kind of 'normality', expressed various concerns including exam pressure, adjusting to social distancing, loss of friendships and the virus itself.
- The report warns of a **surge in demand** and the need for services to be scaled up, better coordinated and a greater emphasis placed on early intervention. It also emphasises the importance of ensuring the full involvement of young people in the renewal process.
- Young people want more focus on wellbeing in schools and for schools to have realistic expectations about what students can achieve following the lockdown.

A number of recommendations are made including funding for mental health services in education settings, a transition period in education settings which make allowances for the effects of lockdown, face-to-face MH support to resume as quickly as possible, and a wellbeing campaign co-produced by young people.

Read the report: [Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs \(Young Minds report\)](#)

Young People's Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Source: NIHR School for Public Health Research

Date: August 2020

Findings from an longitudinal public health research project led by the University of Bristol that explores social media use and adolescent mental health and wellbeing have been published. The study was completed by 1,047 students aged 13-14 across 17 schools in the South West of England. The online survey was completed in April and compared to findings from a pre-pandemic survey in 2019. Key findings include:

- Overall there were **reductions in anxiety and rises in wellbeing** but no large changes in depression in the majority of students.
- We saw **larger improvements in mental health and wellbeing** for students who had poor mental health and wellbeing before lockdown.
- Students with low school, peer and family connectedness pre-pandemic, saw the biggest improvements in mental health and wellbeing during lockdown. Improvements in mental health and wellbeing may be due to the removal of stressors within the school

environment, such as pressure of academic work, and challenging peer relationships.

- Survey results showed **reduced anxiety and improved well-being** coincided with significantly greater usage of social media among girls.
- The biggest increase in social media usage was seen during the week, when more than half of girls (55%) reported spending in excess of three hours daily on social media during lockdown.
- **Students receiving free school meals showed a reduction in anxiety and depression** and an increase in wellbeing during lockdown. This group did not report higher COVID-19 worry during lockdown than students who did not receive free school meals.
- **Students from BME groups did not report poorer mental health or wellbeing** at either time point compared to white students, and did not report higher COVID-19 worry during lockdown compared to white students. BME students showed a reduction in anxiety during lockdown but showed no change in levels of depression or wellbeing.

These findings are clearly at odds with those of some other online surveys. It is possible that this age group was less impacted than younger children who did not have access to social media, or older children who experienced disruptions to transitions or to exams. The sample had lower proportions of some vulnerable groups than the pre-pandemic comparison survey (e.g. BAME students, students entitled to FSM and students with a long-term illness or disability). A further reason may be that this is one of the few surveys that uses objective measures of mental wellbeing (WEMWBS) and is able to make pre-pandemic comparisons. It points to the need for more longitudinal studies of this nature.

Read the report: [Young People's Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic Report \(NIHR School for Public Health Research\)](#)

Read the news story: [New NIHR School for Public Health Research report shows young people's mental health improved during lockdown \(news story\)](#)

Barnardo's research on the impact of lockdown on children and young people

Source: Barnardo's

Date: July 2020

Barnardo's has undertaken a wide range of research throughout the pandemic as part of its 'Big Conversation' campaign. This has involved a YouGov online poll of over 4000 children and young people aged 8-24 in May/June, a survey of Barnardo's frontline workers in April, and in-depth qualitative research with Barnardo's service users in May/June which has included care leavers, children in care, young carers, young people with disabilities, young parents, refugees and young people with experience of sexual abuse.

A recent research report, co-produced with young people, has been published which pulls some of this research together. The report includes a section on the mental health impacts on vulnerable children and young people (findings for specific groups are reported under the relevant section in this briefing). The research found that some children and young people with **pre-existing mental health conditions have had less or no support in lockdown**. Whilst some had accessed remote services, concerns were raised about difficulties in using this mode of service delivery when in crisis. The vulnerability and isolation of children and young people in inpatient mental health services was also highlighted, many of whom were unable to have visits during lockdown.

The report provides a 'what kept me well map' of what children and young people said had **helped them cope during lockdown** (See [Annex 1](#)). Key things that helped included spending time with family, routine and structure, keeping in touch with friends, sleep, exercise and diet, and hobbies and leisure.

Read the report: [Mental Health and COVID-19: In Our Own Words \(Barnardo's Report\)](#)

Findings from the **Barnardos YouGov online poll** (4,283 children and young people aged 8-24 carried out between 15 May and 2 June 2020) are briefly summarised below:

- More than two-fifths (41%) of children and young people respondents said they were **more lonely than before lockdown**, more than a third said they were **more worried** (38%), more sad (37%) or **more stressed** (34%). A third also said they had more trouble sleeping, which could have a knock on effect on school work, behavioural issues and family life.
- **Boredom** (51%), worry (28%) and feeling trapped (26%) were the top three emotions experienced by children and young people in lockdown.
- **Friendship issues were widely reported** - around two thirds (68%) of children and young people said not seeing their friends had been one of the three most difficult things about lockdown. Nearly a quarter (24%) said they found it harder to maintain their friendships during lockdown and nearly half (47%) thought they would still be more isolated from their friends once things had started to return to normal.

Results from a quarterly survey of Barnardo's frontline workers in April (over 1000 responded) reports that more than two-thirds (69%) of Barnardo's staff working directly with children and families say they're supporting people with an increase in mental health issues due to the COVID-19 crisis. **Anxiety and disturbed sleep** were the top two mental health difficulties reported by Barnardo's staff for the children and young people they work with. The top

three concerns of workers were reduced contact with services, children and young people experiencing boredom and impact on mental health.

Read the news release: [Generation lockdown: a third of children and young people experience increased mental health difficulties \(Barnardo's news release\)](#)

Child suicide data during lockdown

Source: National Child Mortality Database

Date: 09 July 2020

The National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) has published a report looking at child death by suicide in England during lockdown. Analysis of figures show that in 2020, during the 82 days before lockdown, there were 26 likely child suicides and a further 25 in the first 56 days of lockdown. The report notes that: there is a concerning signal that **child suicide deaths may have increased** during the first 56 days of lockdown. In 12 of the 25 post-lockdown deaths, factors related to COVID-19 or lockdown were thought to have contributed to the deaths (restriction to education and other activities, disruption to care and support services, tensions at home and isolation appeared to be contributing). However, it is important to note, as child suicides are rare, the analysis is based on small case numbers – meaning that it is not possible to reach definitive conclusions.

Read the report: [Child suicide rates during the COVID-19 pandemic in England: real-time surveillance \(report\)](#)

Disruptions experienced by young people aged 16-24 during first months of the COVID-19 lockdown

Source: University College London

Date: 13 July 2020

Researchers at University College London, Imperial College and the University of Sussex have published a report looking at the mental health consequences experienced by young people aged 16-24 in the UK during the first months of the coronavirus lockdown. Findings from an online survey of 1,507 respondents, 61% of whom reported **previous mental health problems**, carried out between 11 May and 29 June 2020 include: **moderate to high symptoms of anxiety** were reported in 70% of the participants with previous mental health problems and in 46% of those without previous mental health problems: 94% of the participants expected changes in their lives to some extent once the current crisis is over, of whom 6% expected a complete change in their lives with those who expected more changes in their lives experiencing higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Read the report: Disruptions experienced by young people aged 16-24 during first months of the COVID-19 lockdown (UCL report)

The mental health emergency - How has the coronavirus pandemic impacted our mental health?

Source: Mind

Date: 30 June 2020

Mind has published a report looking at the impact of the coronavirus on people's mental health across the UK. Evidence from more than 16,000 responses to surveys carried out in April and May has been used to draw up five tests which the UK Government must meet in order to protect and improve the country's mental health after coronavirus which includes support for children and young people. Recommendations include: implementing a comprehensive plan for supporting children and young people back into education, including those who have experienced trauma, loss and bereavement due to coronavirus and/or are at risk of school exclusion.

Read the report: Five tests for the UK Government Report (Mind)
The mental health emergency How has the coronavirus pandemic impacted our mental health? (Report by Mind)

How COVID-19 is affecting the mental health of children and young people

Source: ZenZone

Date: August

XenZone, which provides online mental health support in England (funded by the NHS), is a 'free, safe and anonymous' online mental service provider for children and young people. 'Kooth' has been publishing monthly data summaries derived from user data in England throughout lockdown. The August data release is drawn from a sample size of over 50,000 unique users logging in during the period of 23/03/2020 - 20/07/2020 and 44,330 unique users last year over a similar period. Whilst the sample is very large, it is heavily biased towards children and young people with mental health concerns; it provides an indication rather than a standardised measure of mental health problems⁵. It is not clear what age of children and young people the data covers. Some caution should be therefore be exercised when interpreting the findings. The report focuses on nine major mental health issues where there has been a noticeable increase in prevalence compared to the same period last year:

- Demand for the online mental health service continues to rise

⁵ The presenting issues are registered against a service user following any interaction that displays this issue. This is typically during counselling, but could also be during any other interaction, such as comments in a forum. The comparison to last year is based on the proportion of the users that have presented with the particular issue, compared to the proportion last year, during the same time period.

- The **most common presenting issues** are anxiety and stress, self-harm/suicidal thoughts and sadness.
- The largest increases (compared to data from the same period in 2020) are seen in sleep difficulties, body image concerns and eating difficulties.
- Other increases reported include mental health issues, loneliness, stress and anxiety, and anger issues.

Read the briefing: [ZenZone Week 30 Briefing: How COVID-19 is Affecting The Mental Health of Children and Young People](#)

Poor mental health in lockdown most common among young women

Source: UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies

Date: 7 Aug 2020

This study based on national representative longitudinal data (survey in May of over 18,000 people aged 19, 30, 50 and 62) found **that poor mental health in lockdown was most common among the 19-year-olds surveyed** (the youngest cohort in the sample). Among 19-year-olds, just over one third of women and just under one quarter of men had symptoms of depression during lockdown in May, and 45% of women and 42% of men had felt lonely during this time.

Read the briefing: [Mental health during lockdown: evidence from four generations \(UCL Briefing\)](#)

Physical health and wellbeing

The **latest report from the ONS** on shielding households in England estimates that 328,000 **clinically extremely vulnerable** (CEV) people **(15%) live in a household with children** aged under 16 years.

Read the report: [ONS Report: Coronavirus and shielding of clinically extremely vulnerable people in England: 9 July to 16 July 2020](#)

An evidence review produced by the **Youth Sport Trust** in June highlighted a number of findings relating to physical activity during lockdown:

- Parents reported that around a third of children were **doing less physical activity** than usual (30% are doing more) and only one fifth were getting their recommended daily allowance of 60 active minutes. **Nearly one in ten children were getting no physical activity.**
- Parents are valuing the time they are spending on activity with their children, believing that sports and fitness are bringing families together: 53% of parents were doing more physical activity with their children

than they did prior to lockdown and 61% felt that keeping fit was helping maintain their family's physical and mental well-being.⁶

Read the review: [The Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on Children and Young People \(Youth Sport Trust Review\)](#)

Coronavirus: children and young people's health

Source: BMJ

Date: 06 August 2020

An article in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) discusses the impact of lockdown on children and young people's health. Findings from a snapshot survey of more than 4,000 paediatricians across the UK and Ireland at the end of April 2020 show a range of impacts of lockdown on health services:

- **Delayed presentations** - 32% of 752 emergency department paediatricians had witnessed delayed presentations. The most common delayed presentation was diabetes, followed by sepsis and new cancer diagnoses. The article states that there were also nine deaths, resulting mainly from sepsis and malignancy, where delayed presentation was considered by the reporting paediatrician to be a significant contributing factor – higher than the total number of childhood COVID-19 deaths reported over the same period in England. The reasons for the delayed presentations included parents strictly adhering to the “Stay at Home” messaging by the government, as well as parental concerns about getting infected by COVID-19 in hospital and not wanting to disturb doctors during the pandemic.
- **Reduction in immunisations** -The lockdown also resulted in declining childhood immunisation rates (although there are signs this is now returning to normal), especially for the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine at one year of age, raising concerns of future outbreaks.
- **Reduction in child protection referrals** - Community paediatricians raised concerns about the lack of referrals for child protection assessment at a time when many parents struggle to cope with staying at home, particularly the most disadvantaged families.

Read the article: [Lockdown measures reduced the risk of covid-19, but had unintended consequences for children \(British Medical Journal\)](#)

⁶ England & Wales Cricket Board (May 2020) Survey
<https://www.standard.co.uk/sport/cricket/exercise-at-homelockdown-sport-ecb-research-a4438781.html>

Education, learning and employment

Parents and their children's concerns about attending school

Source: Oxford University

Date: 29 July 2020

[The Co-SPACE \(Oxford University\) Study](#) has published its latest (5th) supplementary report⁷ from the *COVID-19: Supporting Parents, Adolescents and Children in Epidemics (CO-SPACE)* study which covers parent and child concerns about returning to school. This monthly UK-wide survey is completed by parents of children aged 4-16 and young people aged 11-16. The report provides cross-sectional data from approximately 1,602 parents/carers who answered questions about concerns around children and young people attending school during the COVID-19 pandemic between 06/07/2020 and 27/07/2020. Key findings are:

- **Parents of children with SEN/ND are particularly uncomfortable about their children attending school, as are parents who do not work, and those with lower incomes (<£16,000)**
- Particular concerns for parents of children with SEN/ND and parents on low incomes are that their child will not get the emotional, behavioural and educational support that they need, or that they will struggle with the workload.
- The most common concerns among parents/carers are the **practicalities of their child being in/not in school**, that their child will struggle with the workload, and the lack of educational support.
- Only a minority of children and young people are perceived by their parents/carers to not feel comfortable attending school. No differences by gender or ethnicity were observed (although this may be due to the small number of BME families).
- That said, a higher proportion of parents/carers of **children with SEN/ND** (18% compared to 4.2% of parents with non-SEN children), **pre-existing mental health difficulty and parents on low incomes** reported that their children are not comfortable about attending school. Concerns related to things being uncertain or different, the transition to a new school/class/group and problems with paying attention in class.
- Both primary and secondary school aged children appear to be concerned about things being different or uncertain (e.g. not being able to be with friends). Secondary school aged children appear to be more concerned about academic pressures.

Preparing for September: challenges and opportunities for SEN students

Source: TES

Date: 20 August 2020

⁷ See June and July briefings for findings from previous reports (details on how to acquire these provided at end of this document).

A TES survey of SEN community members (294 respondents) found that a majority (59%) of students adapted well or extremely well to the changes resulting from coronavirus. The second biggest challenge (after social distancing) was reported as supporting children's social, emotional and mental health, followed by pupils adjusting to routine changes and children's anxiety about returning to school. [Read the headline findings from the TES survey.](#)

[The Barnardo's research](#) highlights the likelihood that some **children and young people with SEN** will have struggled with the change in routine and loss of services due to lockdown. The report notes that services, in particular education providers, have a major role in identifying and supporting children and young people, many of whom will be needing support as lockdown further eases.

Coronavirus: children returning to schools in Wales

Source: Barnardo's

Date: 25 June 2020

Barnardo's Cymru and Action for Children Cymru have released figures which show that **85% of school staff in Wales fear that their pupils' mental health has been affected by lockdown** during the coronavirus crisis. A joint briefing highlights learning from practitioners and partners in schools about the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the mental health and well-being of children and young people; what schools think they will need in terms of training and emotional support for school staff; and support from other sectors and organisations in addressing the needs of students and their families, particularly vulnerable children and young people.

Read the briefing: [Lessons from Lockdown: supporting vulnerable children and young people returning to school and to learning \(Barnardo's Wales\)](#)

New term, new challenges, new opportunities: putting children's mental health at the heart of education

Source: Barnardo's Northern Ireland

Date: 10 August 2020

Barnardo's Northern Ireland has published a report looking at teachers' views and experiences on the impact of lockdown, the return to school for pupils, and what help they will need to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. A survey of 167 education professionals across Northern Ireland found that nearly **90% of respondents thought that the pandemic was likely to have an impact on the mental health and wellbeing of pupils.**

Recommendations to government include: prioritising mental health and wellbeing in the recovery curriculum and increasing funding and investment in mental health and wellbeing services in schools.

Read the report: [New term new challenges new opportunities: putting children's mental health at the heart of education \(Barnardo's Northern Ireland report\)](#)

Home schooling in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 crisis: the experiences of parents and carers

Source: Stranmillis University College

Date: May 2020

The results of an online survey on parents/carers' experiences of home-schooling during the lockdown in early May 2020, which received over 2000 responses from across Northern Ireland, have been published. The survey asked how parents/carers were approaching home-schooling, how schools were supporting them, and what could be done to better support their households. The findings demonstrate varied family experiences of lockdown depending on parents' education and employment. Key findings were:

- **The area where children are most likely to have benefited is in their emotional well-being**, where around 1 in 5 claim that there has been an improvement. By contrast, 3 in 5 claim that their child/ren's level of motivation to learn has become worse since home-schooling began.
- **Parents/carers without a degree were more likely to report lower levels of confidence in managing home-education**, and to report simply 'monitoring' their child's learning.
- Key workers were least likely to engage directly in their child/ren's home-schooling and were most likely to encourage their child/ren to learn independently as a result of having to work shifts outside the home.
- When asked for a single recommendation to improve home-schooling, parents/carers' most common call was **more live interaction with teachers**.
- Parent respondents reported that older children tend to prefer learning at school (and miss school more) while younger children are more likely to prefer the home environment.

Read the report: [Home schooling in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 crisis: the experiences of parents and carers \(Stranmillis University College\)](#)

The [Barnardo's research](#) reported that young people entering education, employment and training are worried about disruptions to their employment and education. Some young people are experiencing a decline in the progress of their work and education. Other research has shown that young employees (aged 18-24) were the age group most likely to have lost their job or have been furloughed during the pandemic⁸. Addressing employment and

⁸ Gustaffson, M. (2020). Young Workers in the Coronavirus Crisis. Resolution Foundation. Available at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis>

financial security for young people will be vital for promoting mental health and wellbeing.

Impact on families

Parents report stronger relationships with their children during lockdown

Source: Understanding Society

Date: 23 July 2020

The coronavirus crisis has strengthened parent-child relationships, according to new data from the Understanding Society COVID-19 study.

- About a quarter (26%) of parents reported that their **relationship with their children had become** better since the government's stay at home policy. Less than 5% reported it had become worse.
- Mothers were more likely to report an improvement in their relationships than fathers.
- Working from home may not be as bad for parent-child relationships as some have predicted. Nearly 40% of parents who reduced their hours to look after their children reported their relationships had become better, and only 6% said their relationships had become worse.
- Parents who spend more time home schooling their children reported having a better relationship than those who spend no time with their children.
- **Disadvantaged parents, including lone and low-income parents, were slightly more likely to report their relationships had become worse**, but about 1 in 4 reported it had become better.

These results are based on parents surveyed in the Understanding Society May COVID-19 survey, a nationally representative study that collected data from 5,500 parents. Keep in mind that 97% of parents in Britain say that they have a close or very close relationship with their children.

Read the briefing: [Understanding Society COVID-19 Survey: Briefing Note Wave 2: May 2020. Family Relationships.](#)

Also see [Centre for Population Change - How has the COVID-19 crisis impacted parents' relationships with their children?](#)

Women, young people and parents of children under five worst-hit psychologically by lockdown

Source: Understanding Society

Date: 22 July 2020

Further evidence from the Understanding Society COVID surveys show that women, young people and parents of children under five have been hardest

hit psychologically by the COVID-19 lockdown. The survey which measures mental wellbeing using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ measure) (which includes difficulties sleeping or concentrating, problems with decision-making or feeling overwhelmed) reported a 33% rise among women, 32% rise among parents with young children and 37% rise among young people aged 18 to 24, compared to pre-pandemic levels.

[Find out more about the Understanding Society findings on the mental health of parents of young children.](#)

The UCL Covid Study is a panel study of the psychological and social experiences of adults in the UK during the pandemic. To date, over 70,000 people have participated in the study. The study is not representative of the UK population, but it aims to have good representation across all major socio-demographic groups. Responses from Scotland make up approximately 6% of the sample; households with children make up just under a third of the sample. A summary of relevant findings from the most recent briefing are provide below:

- Decreases in depression and anxiety have occurred across every subgroup. However, depression and anxiety are still highest in young adults, people living alone, **people with lower household income, people living with children**, and people living in urban areas.
- **People with lower household income are becoming more worried about COVID-19** than people with higher household income, and they are more worried about finances, but less worried about unemployment. **People living with children have worried more about all factors**, but the differences on worries relating to COVID-19 and food access have diminished as lockdown has eased.
- **Life satisfaction** is similar to levels two weeks ago, but this remains substantially higher than when lockdown came in. Whilst it was lower amongst people with children during lockdown, this difference has disappeared as lockdown has eased.
- **Loneliness** levels have stabilised in the past fortnight, but are noticeably lower than 21 weeks ago. Loneliness levels are still highest in younger adults, people living alone, people with lower household income, **people living with children**, people living in urban areas, and people with a diagnosed mental health condition.

Read the briefing: [UCL Covid Study - Week 20-21 Psychological response, discrimination & community closeness](#)

Sleepless in Lockdown: unpacking differences in sleep loss during the coronavirus pandemic in the UK

Source: University of Southampton

Date: July 2020

The University of Southampton's research on sleep deprivation during the pandemic reports that **women, particularly those with young children, key workers and BME groups are losing sleep**. This is thought to be due to rising stress levels due to anxieties about health, financial consequences, changes in social life and daily routine, all of which may affect sleep. For women with children aged 0-4 years, a fifth (20%) suffered sleep loss over worry before the pandemic. This doubled to two fifths (40%) during the first four weeks of the lockdown. For women with school children aged 5 – 18, sleep loss also rose, from 22% to 38%. These findings are in-line with other research which suggests that there are consistent gender differences in the experiences and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK.

The research is based on representative UK data survey data from the Understanding Society COVID-19 Study collected during April 2020. It was then compared with survey data collected in 2018/19. The sample included 15,360 respondents aged 16 and above.

Read the report: [University of Southampton Report - Sleepless in Lockdown: unpacking differences in sleep loss during the coronavirus pandemic in the UK](#)

Half of parents struggle to cope with impact of lockdown on children's behaviour

Source: Barnardo's

Date: 19 August 2020

Barnardo's have released findings from a YouGov poll of more than 1,000 British parents which found that 58% of parents have found it difficult to cope with their children at some point during lockdown. Almost a third (30%) report their children are **often frustrated**, with more than a quarter (28%) saying they **get angry more easily** and more than one-in-five (21%) saying they are **sleeping less** at times since lockdown began in March. The top three things that parents thought would help their child cope better during the lockdown were **spending time with wider friends and family (42%), time to be outside in the fresh air away from the home (36%) and going back to school (33%)**. A small but significant proportion (7%) said speaking to a professional children's support worker could help their child cope better.

Read the news story: [Barnardo's - half of parents struggle to cope with impact of lockdown on children's behaviour \(news story\)](#)

One in three parents 'out of their depth' as children struggle with pandemic fallout

Source: Action for Children

Date: 14 July 2020

Action for Children has released figures from a YouGov online survey of 2,001 parents of children aged 18 or under in Great Britain. The survey, carried out between 16–22 June 2020, found that; 36% of parents said that their children are feeling isolated and lonely; 43% of parents reported feeling anxious; and **33% said that they felt out of their depth** when it came to supporting their children during the lockdown. Action for Children is warning that things are likely to get worse as the long term impacts of the pandemic become clearer. After seeing a surge of 415% in the three months of lockdown to its digital parenting advice service, the charity is launching Parent Talk – a new national online service which connects mums and dads with trained parenting coaches.

Read the news release: [Action for Children - One in three parents 'out of their depth' as children struggle with pandemic fallout \(news release\)](#)

Mothers spend more time home schooling & playing with their children than fathers during lockdown

Source: UCL Institute of Education (Centre for Longitudinal Studies)

Date: July 2020

Initial findings from the COVID-19 Survey in Five National Longitudinal Studies (based on an online survey which ran 2 and 31 May 2020 issued to five nationally representative birth cohort studies) show previously reported gender differences in parental involvement in children's home learning, as well as developmental play activities.

- **Home schooling** - Among parents with school-aged children, 58% of parents reported doing some home schooling on a typical weekday during lockdown. This figure was higher for mothers (64%) than for fathers (49%), and for those with relatively higher levels of education - 63% for those with a degree or more, compared to 49% for those with lower levels of education. Time spent on home learning varied by parent's gender, whether parents were working, and age of child. No difference was found by lone parent status or parental education. Parents spent more time helping with home learning than in interactive activities with their primary-aged children.
- **Play activities** - Mothers of pre-school children spent on average 6.2 hours daily on interactive activities with children, compared to an average of 3 hours among fathers. Mothers of primary-aged children also spent more time than fathers on these type of activities (3.4 hours compared to 1.8 hours).

Read the briefing: [UCL Institute of Education Briefing - Parental involvement in home schooling and developmental play during lockdown](#)

Low income families

[Covid Realities Study](#)

Source: The Nuffield Foundation

Date: 14 July 2020

Funded by the The Nuffield Foundation, the Universities of York and Birmingham in collaboration with the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) have published early findings from their research study (Covid Realities) on the impact of COVID-19 on low income families. The qualitative research seeks to explore everyday life for low-income families during the pandemic via online diaries and virtual workshops. Preliminary findings indicate that **some low income families have been left hungry, fearful, stigmatised and excluded**. Recommendations include increasing child benefit by £10 per week and including the perspectives of people on a low income in policy decisions. Other key findings were:

- The pandemic is causing additional and often extreme hardship in families' lives.
- Daily essentials became more costly and less available, sharply raising household costs. Food provision is sometimes insufficient, creating feelings of guilt for parents and carers.
- People's mental health is suffering from both new and compounded strains.
- Financial, emotional, and social support are needed to navigate these additional barriers.
- The end of lockdown and the 'future' beyond looks highly uncertain for many.
- Future concerns centre on finding or retaining work, and on managing financial difficulties.
- The 'new normal' brings with it new costs that may heighten exclusion and inequalities.
- Policy responses have not firmly focused on the needs of families with dependent children.

Read the briefing: [Covid Realities Study - Exploratory Study Findings](#)

The [Children's Society annual survey](#) found that **children in poverty were more worried during lockdown**. A higher proportion of young people in poverty stated they were 'very worried' about Coronavirus than those not in poverty (23% compared to 15%).

The [Barnardo's research](#) covered earlier reported concerns from frontline staff who are supporting someone in or at risk of being in **poverty**, were lack of access to food, finance and basic essential items. In their research, youth colleagues found that **children and young people were anxious about finances** for them and/or their families.

Homelessness

Hundreds of children lived in hotels during lockdown (England)

Source: Children's Commissioner for England

Date: 24 August 2020

The Children's Commissioner for England has published a report based on data from the 15 local authorities with the highest numbers of children living in B&B accommodation. The analysis found that when lockdown began on 23 March there were 714 families housed in B&Bs across the 15 LAs surveyed. Despite this number reducing during lockdown, the report states that across these 15 local authorities, 265 families with children were living in a B&B on 31 May and had been there for at least six weeks – despite council's being legally obliged to properly house families living in such accommodation during lockdown.

- The children's commissioner for England estimates that across England as a whole some 400 and 760 families were living in B&Bs during lockdown.
- In some cases families were moved multiple times during lockdown with one family reported to have been moved 11 times.
- The children's commissioner for England has called on ministers to implement extra measures to protect children from homelessness including providing funding and **support for local authorities to move children out of B&Bs in the event of local lockdowns** and prioritise support for children facing homelessness through mental health services and those provided by health visitors, as well as extra support to help children impacted by homelessness readjust to return to school and catch up on lost learning.

Read the report: [Children's Commissioner for England report - No way out: Children stuck in B&Bs during lockdown](#)

Care experienced and disadvantaged children and young people

Care Leavers in Lockdown

Source: Barnardo's

Read the news story: [Barnardo's news story - care leavers say they're struggling during lockdown](#) (11 April 2020)

Barnardo's has published [online video diaries of care leavers in lockdown](#).

[Other research by Barnardo's](#) reported that care leavers reported lockdown was harder for them without the support of family, that they were facing issues

with housing or finances, and that they were finding it **difficult to access their usual support networks**.

Life Under Lockdown

Source: Leicestershire Cares

Date: 19 May 2020

Leicestershire Cares ran a small rapid participatory assessment with 28 young people from across their youth projects on the impact of the pandemic, lockdown and social distancing restrictions on **vulnerable young people** in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Key findings included:

- **Social isolation** was a key challenge for our participants, **many of whom live alone** and have had little contact with others for over eight weeks.
- **Single young parents with small children** were finding the lockdown particularly stressful and were struggling to manage their own health and wellbeing alongside that of their children.
- Some participants identified positive outcomes arising from the lockdown, including the opportunity to learn new skills, be creative and a newfound appreciation for their health, friends and family.
- Young people highlighted the immediate need for help with mental health and wellbeing, overcoming social isolation and staying safe as restrictions ease. **Future concerns included getting into work, continuing to buy essentials, having to use public transport, and overcoming the negative impact on their mental health.**

Read the report: [Leicestershire Cares – Life Under Lockdown report](#)

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children, young people and families

Impact of Coronavirus on Roma Children

Source: University of Central Lancashire

Date: 29 June 2020

The University of Central Lancashire has published a policy paper looking at research on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Roma children and the barriers to their health and wellbeing. The paper reports on information from professionals working with young Roma, from 13 organisations in nine European countries including the UK. The findings show consistent patterns of challenging conditions experienced by some young Roma and their communities in relation to: Lack of Essentials for Basic Health and Income (including access to food and water, poor housing and reduced income/problems accessing government support); Wellbeing and Education (issues included isolation, lack of access to outdoor space impacting on

mental wellbeing, digital exclusion); and Discrimination and Participation (including negative attitudes from the police, unemployment, and lack of information provision). The report includes a number of lessons learned and recommendations for policy makers.

Read the briefing: [University of Central Lancashire - Roma children's participation: shaping responses to COVID-19 in the EU and Bulgaria \(Report\)](#)
Read the news story: [University of Central Lancashire - Roma children's participation: shaping responses to COVID-19 in the EU and Bulgaria \(news story\)](#)

The [Barnardo's research](#) highlights the disproportionate impact of Coronavirus on BAME children and young people and raises concerns about continuing **stigma and bullying** against Chinese children and young people as they return to school, and the difficulties that children and young people face in **accessing information, help and support**. The report also states that the pandemic will increase the number of BME young carers.

Young Carers

The [Barnardo's research](#) states that **the pandemic will increase the number of young carers, especially BME young carers**, as parents, siblings and other relatives have been required to shield or have become ill from the virus. Lack of information (e.g. on whether a family member was on the 'vulnerable' list) was associated with **increased uncertainty and anxiety for young carers**.

Children and families affected by disability

The Human Rights Watch report covered above reported on the impact of school closure on children with disabilities. It that school closures had **disproportionately negative consequences for children with disabilities**. The submission notes that children deemed to have "special educational needs" ("SEN") and children with intellectual or developmental disabilities were at an increased risk of missing out on education with a transition to remote learning. **Children with "SEN" are not getting the support they need** which makes it much harder for them to access the relevant tools and engage in remote classes; this has meant that some of these children have not accessed any education since schools closed. Families have struggled and there are great concerns that these children will fall behind. **Some children with disabilities and chronic health conditions are at risk of further exclusion from education if unable to return to in-person learning due to heightened medical risk and the need to shield**. More guidance is

needed for staff on how to support children when they do return to school e.g. regarding physical contact. Other recommendations include access to remedial education programs and teaching support for those who have fallen behind.

Read the report: [Human Rights Watch Submission to the UK Parliament Education Committee: Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services](#)

Vulnerable Children

How safe are our children? An overview of data on adolescent abuse

Source: NSPCC

Date: August 2020

The report compiles and analyses child protection data from across the UK, and this year focuses on abuse perpetrated against adolescents. The report this year also includes an overview of emerging data on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the safety of children and young people in the UK (however, most of the official data used relates to 2018/19). The report found that rates of police recorded physical, sexual and online abuse offences against, rates of those in care, and rates of those subject to child protection measures, are all higher for adolescents than younger children. Many of the risk factors associated with abuse and neglect have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

- NSPCC helpline and Childline counselling sessions has seen an increase in the number and proportion of contacts and counselling sessions to our NSPCC helpline and Childline services about abuse and neglect, especially emotional abuse. There has also been an increase in reports of sexual abuse within the family.
- **Physical abuse** - although there has been a drop in the overall number of children and young people attending accident and emergency departments, data from Great Ormond Street suggests a potential increase in the incidence of abusive head trauma (see below).
- **Domestic abuse** - Data from the charity Refuge and NSPCC helpline also suggests that children are increasingly being exposed to domestic abuse.
- **Online abuse** - Data compiled by Europol shows significant increases in activity relating to child sexual abuse and exploitation, including a rise in the number of referrals from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to Europol about child sexual abuse material. There has also been an increase in calls to the Internet Watch Foundation about sexual abuse material.

- **Abuse outside the home** – There is some evidence that teenage girls feel less safe going out in public than before lockdown. There is also research that suggests that lockdown has created new recruitment opportunities for gangs and a refocusing of recruitment of young people away from urban centres to local areas.⁹
- The impact of the pandemic on **household finance and adult mental health** (particularly woman and parents of young children) which has been widely reported may also impact negatively on children and young people. That said, the number and proportion of contacts to the NSPCC helpline and Childline counselling sessions about parental mental health have remained low.
- Other issues reported include **child mental health and wellbeing** (including emerging data that suggests that child suicide deaths may have increased during lockdown, although it is too early to say whether this is a definite trend) and **lack of face-to-face contact with services**. There are increasing concerns about the child protection system's ability to cope with a potential influx of newly identified concerns.

Read the report: [NSPCC Report - How safe are our children?](#)

Rise in the incidence of abusive head trauma during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Archives of Disease in Childhood

Date: 02 July 2020

A letter published in the Archives of Disease in Childhood reports on an increase in the incidence of abusive head trauma (AHT) in infants at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children during the coronavirus pandemic. Figures show that from March 23 to April 23 the hospital saw ten infants ranging in age from two weeks to 13 months diagnosed with AHT. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the hospital reported an average of 0.67 such cases over the same time period each year. This represents a 15-fold increase during the pandemic compared with previous years.

Read the letter: [Archives of Disease in Childhood letter - rise in the incidence of abusive head trauma during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Supporting 'off-radar' children and young people who are at risk of violence/abuse in their household

Source: Kings College London

Date: 16 April 2020

Researchers from King's College London in collaboration with Survivors' Voices, the Violence Abuse and Mental Health Network, and The McPin

⁹ See p11 of the NSPCC report for full list of references. See [The State of Girls' Rights In The UK: early insights into the impact of coronavirus pandemic on girls](#) (Play International, May 2020)

Foundation is undertaking research to understand how best to identify and support 'off-radar' children and young people at risk of violence and abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This survivor-led report contains possible actions to support children who are 'off-radar' (unknown to any statutory services) during and post pandemic 'lockdown' periods. This report documents the results of a survivor-led and rapid response qualitative online survey (the survey ran 30th Mar to 1 Apr and received 43 responses) targeted at people who had experience of being abused as children whilst off radar, in order to identify practical actions that may help reach this population. This Part 1 Report is an initial collation and thematic analysis of the results of that survey which aims to inform possible actions. It covers messaging and communication to children and young people at risk and suggestions for further research.

Read the report: [Kings College London - supporting 'off-radar' children and young people who are at risk of violence/abuse in their household: Part 1 \(interim report\)](#)

Harmful content and online safety - Report harmful content (RHC) has seen a 190% rise in cases during lockdown based on the same period in 2019. These are partly attributed to the site being publicly available (it was piloted in 2019) but there also reports of an **increase in online abuse/ harassment/ impersonation** as part of a wider pattern of **domestic violence** over the last few months, and an increase in reports about **text based child sexual abuse** (CSA) content on independently owned sites.

Read the article: [UK Safer Internet Centre Helplines - Impact of COVID-19 Report](#)

The **Kooth mental health online service** continues to publish data about young service users' experiences of abuse and neglect during lockdown in England. The mental health service is free and anonymous; data is based on what presenting issues are registered against a service user - typically during counselling but it could also be during any other interaction such as comments in a forum (which may be less reliable and lead to over-reporting). The June data release reports an **increase in sexual abuse** (up 46% from last year) (previous releases reported increases in other types of abuse – see C&F July briefing).

[Read the ZenZone \(Kooth\) Data Release June 11 2020 - Week 14: How COVID-19 is Affecting The Mental Health of Children and Young People.](#)

Domestic abuse and family violence

The **UCL Covid Study** discussed earlier (see Impact on Families section) reports that domestic abuse ('being physically or psychologically abused') has remained relatively stable since the easing of lockdown. However, it remains **slightly higher in people living with children** compared to those living with just other adults.

The impact of COVID-19 on domestic abuse survivors and the services supporting them

Source: Women's Aid

Date: 18 August 2020

Women's Aid has published a report on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on adult and child survivors of domestic abuse and the services supporting them. The report includes a chapter on the impact of the pandemic on child survivors of domestic abuse. Findings include: **53% of respondents who were currently experiencing domestic abuse said their children had seen more abuse**; and **38% said that their abuser had shown an increase in abusive behaviour towards the children**.

Read the report: [Women's Aid - A perfect storm: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic abuse survivors and the services supporting them](#)

The report is part of a wider survivor-led project by King's College London, Survivors' Voices, the Violence Abuse and Mental Health Network, and The McPin Foundation. The project aims to understand how best to identify and support 'off-radar' children and young people during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Read more information about this new study on children and young people at risk of violence and abuse during COVID-19.](#)

Experiences of child and adolescent to parent violence in the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: University of Oxford

Date: 19 August 2020

Researchers at the University of Oxford and the University of Manchester have published a report looking at families experiencing child and adolescent to parent violence (C/APV) during the coronavirus pandemic. Findings from an online survey of 104 parents who have experienced C/APV from their child aged 10-19 years and 47 practitioners who work with families experiencing C/APV include:

- **70% of parents reported an increase in violent episodes during lockdown;**
- 69% of practitioners said they had seen an increase in referrals for families experiencing C/APV; and
- 64% of practitioners identified that the **severity or incidence of violence had increased.**

Read the report: [University of Oxford report - Experiences of child and adolescent to parent violence in the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Children involved with the Justice System

Risk of vulnerable children being excluded from school for behaviour resulting from being criminally exploited by gangs and drugs traffickers

Source: Just for Kids Law

Date: 26 Aug 2020

A report on how vulnerable children are excluded from school for behaviour resulting from being criminally exploited by gangs and drug traffickers highlights how the pandemic may have left some children at increased risk of exploitation. Just for Kids highlights the **risk of an increase in exclusions** if children are not reintegrated and supported properly.

Read the report: [Just for Kids Law Report - Excluded, exploited, forgotten: Childhood criminal exploitation and school exclusions](#)

[Barnardo's research](#) reported that practitioners working with **children and young people with a parent in prison** highlighted increasing mental health needs. The impact of COVID-19 is that social visits to prisons have stopped and children and young people are **anxious about the safety of their parent**. There has also been a decline in community-based support as a result of COVID-19 (e.g. pastoral care and prison-based family support services).

LGBTQ+ Children and Young People

The [Barnardo's research](#) cites evidence on difficulties experienced by LGBTQ+ children and young people in **accessing mental and physical health support during lockdown**, as well as informal support (e.g. from friends) outside their household. That said, some participants reported the pandemic had helped them come to terms with their gender identity.

The [NIHR research](#) found that LGBTQ+ students and those with a health problem or disability had **higher anxiety and depression, and lower levels of wellbeing pre-pandemic**. Although anxiety reduced and wellbeing

increased broadly across the sample there was not much change in these outcomes for this sub-group.

Impact on services – Scottish and UK Evidence

Remote mental health interventions for young people

Source: Youth Access

Date: 09 July 2020

Youth Access has published a report on remote mental health interventions for young people. Findings from analysis of evidence from 50 academic studies involving young people aged 11-25 carried out across 9 countries including the UK include: **remote forms of support can lead to positive outcomes amongst young people**; remote interventions improved accessibility for those who struggle to access face-to-face services; and remote interventions are not suitable for all young people, and should not replace face-to-face services.

Read the report: [Youth Access Report - Remote mental health interventions for young people: A rapid review of the evidence](#)

Impact on CAMHS during the pandemic

Source: Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Date: 21 July 2020

The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (ACAMH) has released a podcast in which Dr Andrew Beck, President Elect of the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP), talks about the changes he has seen in CAMHS and how it is being affected by the COVID19 pandemic, why CBT is his intervention of choice, and the reasons he advocates behavioural activation to improve the mood children and families during the COVID19 pandemic.

[Listen to the podcast: Dr. Andrew Beck 'CAMHS, COVID19, and CBT'](#)

Children's Hearings Consultation (Scotland)

Source: CELCIS & CYCJ

Date: July 2020

The Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) and Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) have published the results of an online survey of those involved with virtual Children's Hearings. Participants included young people aged over 12, parents/carers, reporters and panel members, and practitioners who routinely attend children's hearings. The

survey ran from 15 to 28 June and was completed by 276 respondents, the vast majority of whom were practitioners (only 5 young people and 16 parents/carers participated).

The advantages of virtual hearings were that they offer a familiar environment for young people, parents and carers, as well as reducing the time and cost of travel. More challenging aspects include access to paperwork, confidential space for advocates and participants, and technological barriers. Fairness, how inclusive a virtual hearing can be, and the rights of children (many children did not attend their virtual hearing), were key concerns. Some parents indicated that virtual hearings were far less effective than face-to-face ones.

Despite the many challenges reported by respondents, the overwhelming majority of professional respondents reported that they considered this way of working was justifiable in the current circumstances. Only eight of 255 respondents considered it not to be.

Young people indicated a wish for more support during the panel and the opportunity to speak to the panel alone e.g. before the hearing. Parents and carers reported mixed experiences of virtual hearings. Some parents referenced benefits such as not needing to travel and everybody being able to participate, whilst others found the experience impersonal and reported problems with sound quality. Given the very low numbers of child respondents in particular, further research is needed on how future virtual hearings could be improved and made more accessible for children and young people.

Read the report: [CELCIS & CYCJ - Experiences of virtual Children's Hearings: A rapid consultation Report](#)

The role of youth work in schools and colleges

Source: National Youth Agency

Date: 26 June 2020

The National Youth Agency (NYA) has published a report outlining the opportunity for the youth sector to work collaboratively with schools and colleges to ensure the best outcomes for young people as the country emerges from lockdown. The report explores the role of youth services and youth work in schools and colleges, and the **impact of the pandemic on vulnerable young people**, in particular. Key messages include:

- Not all young people will be ready to return to school or college. Some **will need additional support to socialise** after self-isolation and to cope with increased anxieties, trauma or bereavement.

- The pandemic has highlighted the need to bring formal education (schools and colleges) and non-formal education (youth work and youth services) together.
- As we adjust to a 'new normal', post-pandemic, youth work can further help develop young people's voices, influence and be active in their communities. It is important to engage with and listen to young people, be agile in our response to their needs, interests and concerns in a rapidly changing and uncertain world – to be confident in their futures.

Read the report: [National Youth Agency Report – Time Out: Re-imagining Schools: a youth work response to COVID 19](#)

Inspiring Scotland Research into Digital Exclusion in Scotland

Source: Inspiring Scotland

Date: June 2020

This report provides an overview of the current digital exclusion landscape to inform future developments. Key messages include:

- The **lack of connectivity is impacting on the poorest and most isolated in society**. The third sector is trying to respond, but sometimes they, and more often those they are trying to help, do not have the technology, connectivity and the skills needed to connect with one another.
- This is not just about supplying suitable technology. Beneficiaries must also be provided with the **appropriate skills, confidence, mentoring and support** for the long term.
- The Coronavirus Pandemic provides an opportunity for a turning point. Now, a concerted and extensive effort is needed to turn the tide.

Read the report: [Inspiring Scotland report - Research into Digital Exclusion in Scotland](#)

How social work and child protection are helping children and families during COVID-19 and can do so beyond it

Source: Research in Practice (University of Birmingham)

Date: 26 Aug 2020

This ongoing qualitative research has been following the same sample of social workers in four local authorities for over three months, gathering their views and experiences of the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on their work. The research is now starting interviews with parents in the same cases the researchers are shadowing. [Emerging research findings from the University of Birmingham](#) show that since the start of the pandemic children's social care have been innovative and have improvised in creative ways that, if sustained post-pandemic, **could renew practice for the better** and enhance the lives of children and families. The research identifies a number of areas for consideration for future practice:

- **Humane practice** - Social distancing hasn't stopped social workers and family support workers from being relational and finding ways of being effective and achieving non-physical closeness to some families. Getting help to families has been easier and quicker because during lockdown the usual bureaucratic complexities of applying for vouchers to use food banks, for instance, have been removed.
- **Outdoor and mobile practice** - A consistent finding is that workers have gone on walks ('side-by-side' communication¹⁰) with young people and sometimes parents and used parks and other open spaces near family homes to walk, play or just be together in. When home visits are tense, using these other environments provides new opportunities for reflection and discussion, **particularly for young people who felt more relaxed in an open space.**
- **Changes in communication and time use** – Less time has been spent with children and families during lockdown to prevent transmission. However, the dramatic increase in the use of video and telephone comms has meant that it is quite common for families to be spoken to frequently and even every day. There are more shorter, frequent 'check-in' communications which are followed up with longer more substantial meetings.
- **Hybrid practice: Integrating face-to-face, digital and humane practice** - A striking feature of the development of practice since lockdown is the integration of a variety of modes of communication and ways of relating. Despite maintaining physical distancing social workers' narratives suggest they are getting emotionally close to some families and establishing meaningful relationships with the infants, older children and parents. This relationship based practice appears to be having a positive impact and supporting young people and parents to develop and change, a view that has been confirmed by some parents.

The University of Birmingham has published two research briefings relating to this study:

June briefing: This briefing shares findings on the challenges of achieving social distancing during child protection work, especially on home visits, and how children and families and social workers can be kept safe during the coronavirus crisis. The briefing is based on data gathered during April, May and early June 2020 from four local authorities in England.

July briefing: This briefing shares some emerging findings (as per above) about how COVID-19 has disrupted child protection and led children's social care to improvise in creative ways that, if sustained

¹⁰ Walking alongside children and other family members is felt to offer a form of 'side-by-side' rather than 'face-to-face' communication that is highly productive, since people accessing services often disclose more when on the move (Ferguson (2016) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02650531003741553>).

post-pandemic, could renew practice and provide improved outcomes for children and families.

[Read more about the University of Birmingham's research project.](#)

Managing through COVID-19: the experiences of children's social care in 15 English local authorities

Source: Kings College London

Date: 05 July 2020

Researchers at Kings College London have published a report looking at the experiences of 15 local authority children's social care departments in England during the coronavirus pandemic **to understand the changes put in place, how they had worked and what the legacy might be.** Topics covered in the study carried out in late May and early June 2020 include referrals of concerns about children's welfare; working with families in a pandemic; contact with families; child protection conferences; contact between children and birth families; foster care ; placements and disrupted placements; care leavers and unaccompanied young people seeking asylum; residential homes; and multi-agency working. The key findings relating to lessons from lockdown which are relevant in the event of further local or national outbreaks of COVID-19 as set out below:

- The lessons include ensuring a sufficient supply of PPE, revising the guidance developed in the light of experience, and assuming a more measured approach to work rather than operating in emergency mode.
- A proportion of meetings and other interactions will continue to be conducted virtually but these should be monitored to determine what it is effective and efficient to do and in what particular circumstances.
- **The use of technology in contacting parents should be approached with caution**, taking account of the family's ability to access it and their confidence in working in this way, and the service's capacity to provide support in doing so.
- **The potential of technology to improve social workers' engagement with young people has been established**, but it is important to recognise that it will not work for everyone and there will be those who do not wish to use it in some circumstances. It was found to be less appropriate for younger children.
- It will be important to build on positive developments that have emerged such as those in relation to multi-agency working.
- In all the feedback from authorities there was a note of caution about a future when the extent of harm to many children would be revealed after many months when it had been hidden. It was expected that the number of referrals would rise rapidly once schools reopened.

[Read the King's College London briefing paper on 'Managing through COVID-19: the experiences of children's social care in 15 English local authorities'.](#)

Read the report: King's College London Report: Managing through COVID-19: the experiences of children's social care in 15 English local authorities

Local lockdowns – emerging evidence

With local restrictions taking place more frequently, it is useful to consider what the impact of further local lockdowns may have on children and young people and how this might compare to the national lockdown.

Life under Local Lockdown

Source: Leicestershire Cares (a charity which supports vulnerable children and care leavers)

Date: 29 July 2020

Leicestershire Cares conducted a snap assessment with 22 young people from across their projects on the **effect that the local lockdown restrictions are having on vulnerable young people and whether it was different to the national lockdown**. The participants included young people at risk of homelessness, with experience of the care system, who have a history of offending, and who are long-term unemployed. The research found that for some young people, **the local lockdown is increasing feelings of social isolation and anxiety about the future**.

- Experiences vary with some young people finding it boring, whilst others (mostly those not living in the family home) were struggling with increased social isolation. Not being able to travel across the lockdown boundary means that some young people are **now more isolated than before** as they cannot meet with relatives and friends outside of the lockdown area.
- The knowledge that the rest of the country are easing out of lockdown has resulted in **intense frustration and even higher feelings of isolation** amongst young people, which in turn has affected their mental health.
- Young people reported feeling **confused and anxious about the current rules**, and also a sense of losing independence and control over their lives.
- The **top three concerns** were staying safe, finding work or starting a course (young people felt unemployment was likely to be even higher following the local lockdown, and some were reluctant to start work until they were sure it could be safe) and an increased concern about the risk of further local lockdowns.
- The charity has made three recommendations which include **urgent interventions to ease the impact of local lockdowns on young**

people's mental health; clearer guidance for young people and more help for other areas in preparing for local lockdowns.

"There was so much to look forward to but then the second lockdown happened. My mental health deteriorated rapidly"

Read the report: [Leicestershire Cares - Life Under Lockdown: Assessing the impact of the local lockdown on young people in affected areas of Leicester and Leicestershire](#)

New and forthcoming studies

New children and young people COVID-19 research

Scottish Research

[The Children's Parliament](#) will run its final COVID-19 survey for 8-14 year olds in September. The survey looks at changes in wellbeing across a number of domains including learning and activities; access to information, expressing opinions and experiencing rights; health; and family and friends.

The Children's Parliament is also conducting some qualitative research in September with younger children (age 3-7) and their parents about their experiences of the pandemic and feelings about being back at nursery/school.

Young Scot/Children's Parliament/YouthLink will run a further two waves of the **Lockdown Lowdown survey**. Timescales are still to be confirmed but it is likely that wave 2 will go live at the end of September with reporting in December, and wave 3 will go live in the new year.

[Community in Action](#) project to look at lessons learned The ALLIANCE has outlined plans to look at the learning from case studies it has published on third sector responses to COVID-19. The Community in Action initiative will look at actions taken during the crisis, organisations' vision for the future and the challenges that will be faced in realising these visions.

Forthcoming UK research

[CONTRAST Study \(University of Birmingham\)](#) - short and long term impacts of COVID-19 on older children's health-related behaviours, learning and wellbeing study. This study aims to explore the short-term impacts of the COVID-19 (lockdown) restrictions on **learning, eating behaviours, sleep, physical and other activities, and wellbeing** in children aged 11-15 years. It will explore differences in the impacts according to **gender, ethnicity and**

family affluence. The study will also follow up children once they are back at school in order to explore the longer-term effects of the COVID-19 restrictions. It involves an open online survey for children.

#Covid under 19 – Life Under Coronavirus Survey

A coalition of international NGOs led by Terres des Hommes, the UN Secretary General on Violence against children and the Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast has run an international survey of children aged 8-17 years old about how their rights have been impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic (survey closed 2 Aug). This includes asking about children's right to health care, education, play, to be safe and to have their views taken seriously. The survey was available in 27 languages, including easy read English. The 'Life Under Coronavirus' survey adopts a child rights-based approach in order to understand how children are experiencing this moment in time. Findings have not yet been published.

New research with children and families with vulnerabilities

Young Scot/Children's Parliament/YouthLink will carry out a series of focus groups with young carers, BME young people, disabled young people, young people with experience of custody and/or the criminal justice system and care experienced young people to explore their experiences and needs in more detail. These focus groups will be carried out and reported alongside wave 2 of the lockdown Lowdown survey. Timescales are TBC but focus groups are likely to be in October with reporting in December.

CSO-funded projects - The Scottish-led rapid COVID-19 studies funded by the CSO are due to complete in October/November. These include projects relating to the wellbeing and mental health of vulnerable children and young people and low income single parent families (see June Briefing for full list of relevant projects).

University of Southampton and University of York's [SHARE Study](#) - It involves a series of surveys for parents with children with a serious health condition who may feel particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 outbreak. These include surveys for children and young people with cancer, kidney conditions, heart conditions, allergies, hydrocephalus, cystic fibrosis and life-limiting conditions. The surveys aim to assess the needs of children and young people with a serious condition and their parents, during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Notes and further information

This briefing document is intended for information and awareness on current and emerging evidence on the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people, in particular those with vulnerabilities. It is not an exhaustive overview or a critical appraisal or endorsement of the quality of research included.

Some of these summaries have been drawn from the NSPCC Learning series updates (CASPAR weekly update) and the Care Inspectorate CYP Bulletin series.

Other briefings available:

COVID-19: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABILITIES JULY EVIDENCE BRIEFING

COVID-19: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABILITIES JUNE EVIDENCE BRIEFING

Children & Families Analytical Unit, Scottish Government

ANNEX 1



Source: Barnardos (2020) Mental Health and COVID-19: In Our Own Words (p21)

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